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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

State Department review completed

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4 June 1967



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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

A two-day battle in Quang Tin Province early in the weekend resulted in nearly 500 Communist soldiers killed. South Vietnam's provisional assembly has voted down changes in the electoral laws requested by the Directorate.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Nearly 500 Communist soldiers of the NVA 2nd Division have been killed in northern Quang Tin Province in the two-day battle which began on 2 June (Paras. 1-3). Recent reports suggest that enemy units are preparing for rocket and/or artillery attacks on military targets in the Saigon area (Paras. 4-6). Two detainees from the 9th Battalion of the NVA 3rd Division report that replacements for the division have recently infiltrated and that units of the division have plans to attack and/or ambush an American unit (Paras. 7-8).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The provisional assembly, in stormy sessions on 2 June, turned down both requests of the Directorate for changes in the electoral laws, but uncertainties of constitutional interpretation indicate that the issues may not yet be resolved (Paras. 1-4). The assembly's debate over the Directorate's proposal to change the presidential nominating procedure reflected the differences between Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu and Ky's apparent efforts to embarrass Thieu on this issue (Para. 5).

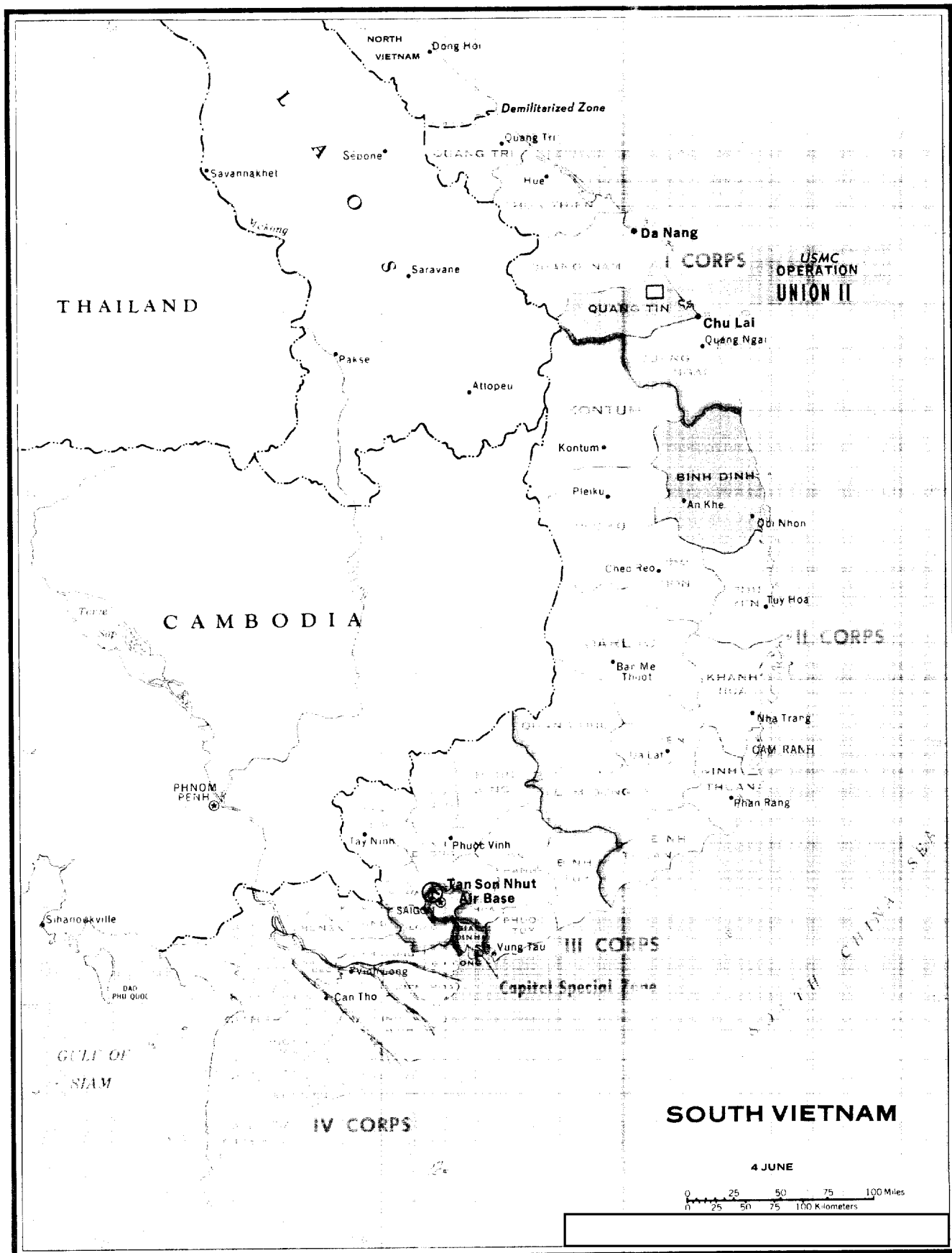
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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: Two MIG-17s were downed by US pilots bringing the total of downed MIG aircraft to 73 (Para. 1). Two US Air Force planes were downed while participating in armed reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam over the weekend (Para. 2). Available evidence indicates that the casualties on the Soviet ship Turkestan were caused by projectiles or fragments from the intense antiaircraft fire during the US attack on targets near Cam Pha port (Paras. 3-7).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Communist sources are playing up Hanoi's continued willingness to talk with the US in exchange for a bombing pause (Paras. 1-7).



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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The intense fighting between US Marines participating in Operation UNION II and Communist troops in coastal Quang Tin Province has subsided with heavy enemy casualties reported. The two-day battle, which began on 2 June when two Marine companies encountered an enemy force 33 miles northwest of Chu Lai, developed into a regimental-sized confrontation with the commitment of the entire US 5th Marine Regiment together with South Vietnamese Army units which established blocking positions.

2. The enemy force--possibly consisting of elements of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 3rd and 21st regiments, both subordinate to the NVA 2nd Division--fought tenaciously from well-prepared positions but was finally compelled to withdraw westward into the hills where the Communists have normally enjoyed sanctuary over the years. It is possible that the enemy units had moved into the lowlands of Quang Tin Province to resupply themselves with rice and other foodstuffs, or that their movement may have been the beginning of a general enemy offensive against strategic allied lines of communications and/or vital installations in the coastal areas between Da Nang and Chu Lai.

3. American losses for this two-day engagement total 54 killed and another 120 wounded in contrast to the reported Communist casualties of 474 killed.

Communists Prepare for Rocket Attacks Near Saigon

4. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Communist units subordinate to the 165th Regiment of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 7th Division are located to the northwest of Saigon where they are preparing for attacks against allied military targets in the capital area. One company of the 2nd Battalion has been performing reconnaissance on Tan Son Nhut Air Base and nearby ammunition dumps and

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radar installations. This enemy battalion, in addition to its normal armament, reportedly has several rocket launchers, possibly the 122-mm. or the 140-mm., both of which have been used previously by the enemy.

5. This is the second recent report of rocket launchers in Gia Dinh Province. The first was provided by a US reconnaissance aircraft which sighted several rocket launchers in a pineapple field approximately four miles from--and within range of--Tan Son Nhut.

6. Documents captured in late March in Gia Dinh Province indicated that this area was under active organization by the Communists, with the preparation of rocket and artillery firing sites being one of the primary missions. There were no indications, however, of the timing of the planned attacks.

Elements of the NVA 3rd Division Receive Replacements

7. Preliminary interrogation reports of two NVA soldiers [redacted] detained on 1 June in northeastern Binh Dinh Province have indicated that the NVA 3rd Division has been receiving replacements which have recently infiltrated into the country. [redacted]

[redacted] infiltration group which arrived in Binh Dinh Province in March as replacements for the 9th Battalion of the 22nd Regiment/NVA 3rd Division. He stated that the morale of the 9th Battalion was low due to the inefficiency of the officers and the lack of food.

8. [redacted] claimed that the mission of the 9th Battalion was to raid or ambush an American unit to show the local cadre the strength of the NVA. However, since last fall, the continuing efforts of the allied search-and-destroy operations in northeastern Binh Dinh Province have forced units of the NVA 3rd Division to disperse.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The Provisional National Assembly in its morning and afternoon sessions of 2 June rejected the Directorate's requests for changes in the presidential and senatorial election laws. Both sessions were marked by heated debate, uncertainty of constitutional interpretation, and overtones of the rivalry between Premier Ky and Chief of State Thieu. It is not yet clear whether the proposals raised by the Directorate have in fact been finally laid to rest. The assembly is scheduled to reconvene on 5 June, but is expected at that session to discuss the issue of unfair press criticism of its proceedings.

2. The morning session on 2 June took up the first of the Directorate's requests, that of deleting the provision (Article 10) governing the nomination of presidential candidates. Instead of debating the merits of the provision, however, the deputies focused their attention on the question of whether the Directorate had a right to propose changes in the electoral law--that is, whether the executive power of veto under the constitution was applicable to this transitional period--or whether it was merely requesting consideration of its views. Attempts by Ky's supporters to force an assembly ruling on this question failed, but the assembly finally voted by secret ballot (45-39 with 8 abstentions or invalid votes) to retain the provision that presidential candidates must be "introduced" by 30 elected representatives of the people.

3. The remainder of the debate on 2 June concerned the Directorate's request that the election dates set by the assembly in the electoral laws--3 September for the presidential contest and 17 December for the senate or upper house of the legislature--be rescheduled to conform with those set earlier by the Armed Forces Council--1 September for the presidential and senatorial elections and 1 October for the lower house of the legislature. Discussion, centering on a petition from

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members of the progovernment Democratic Alliance Bloc for a rescheduling as requested by the Directorate, became so heated that one progovernment deputy threatened the life of a colleague, and most of the Democratic Alliance Bloc members eventually walked out of the session. As a result, the assembly voted by secret ballot (45-9 with one abstention) to retain the 3 September/17 December dates set in the electoral laws.

4. There is some question, however, that the assembly has yet permanently resolved either of the issues raised by the Directorate. On a technical point of constitutionality, the Directorate and its supporters may argue that a Directorate veto has not been overruled, as required, by an absolute majority (58) of the assembly. There are reports that at least some deputies expect to reopen the question of the election dates.

Ky-Thieu Rivalry

5. In its debate over Article 10 of the presidential electoral law, the assembly divided sharply between supporters of Premier Ky and his opponents who tended to reflect the views of Chief of State and Directorate chairman Thieu. Thieu has publicly characterized the requirement that a candidate have 30 elected sponsors as "unconstitutional and undemocratic," whereas Ky has publicly dismissed it as of little importance to "those who have the ability to run." Ky's strategy in the assembly was evidently to cause Thieu a loss of face by holding him personally responsible for the Directorate's stand on the issue. In addition, there are reports that Ky's backers are trying to line up "hundreds" of elected provincial councilors to sponsor Ky and create an impression of a groundswell for his candidacy. This could further embarrass Thieu should his opposition to the requirement inhibit him from seeking such endorsements.

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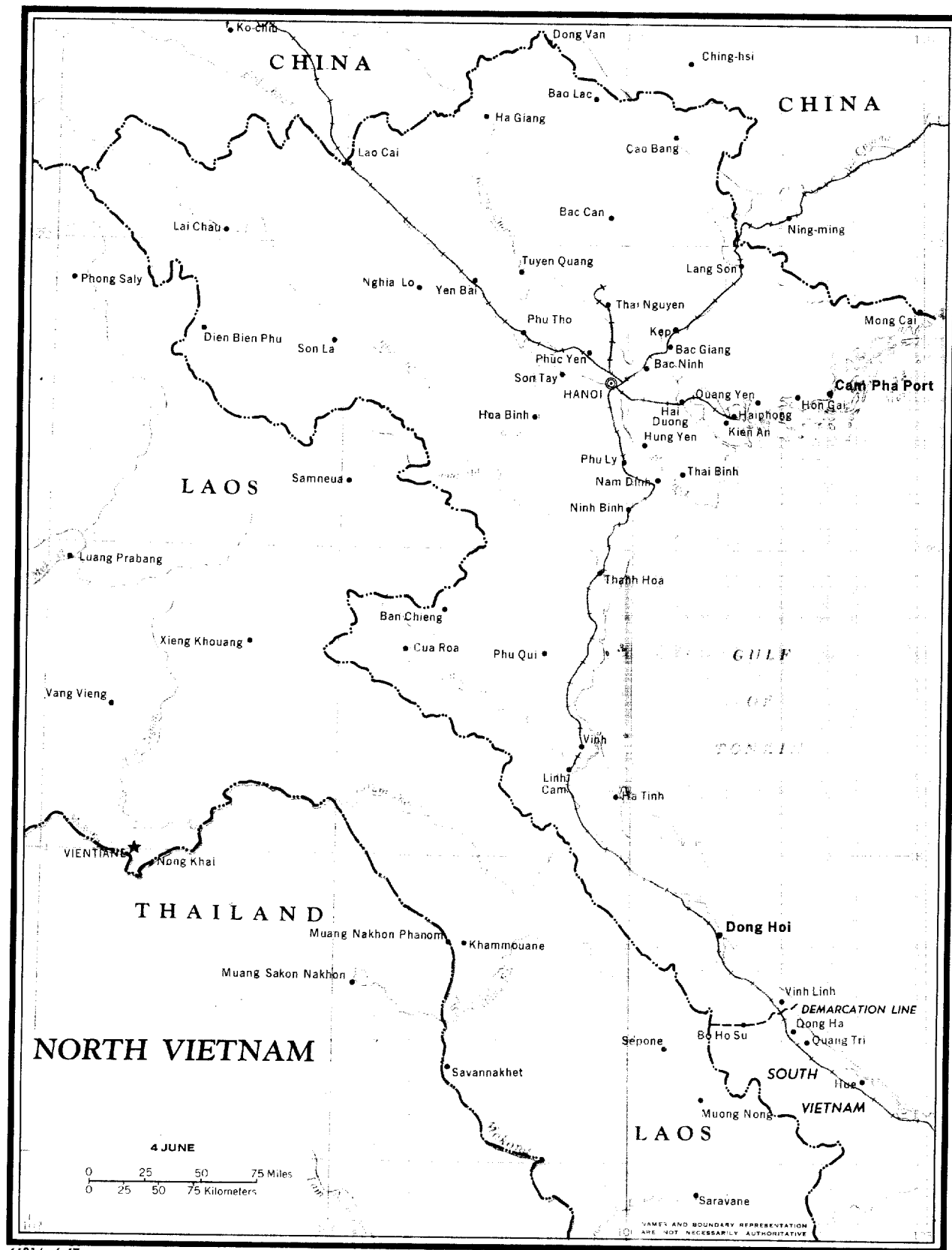
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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Two North Vietnamese MIG-17 fighters were shot down by American pilots during raids over North Vietnam on 3-4 June. This brings the total number of enemy fighter aircraft shot down by US pilots to 73. Both of the MIG aircraft were downed by US Air Force F-105s in one engagement 28 miles northeast of Hanoi. US pilots reported sighting and/or engaging other MIG aircraft on four other occasions over the weekend, however none were downed.

2. Two US aircraft were reported lost over the weekend while participating in armed reconnaissance missions in the southern part of North Vietnam. A US Air Force F-4C was reported down from unknown causes about 40 miles northwest of Dong Hoi; both of the pilots are presumed lost. A US Air Force F-5 was downed by Communist ground fire and the pilots was picked up in the water east of Dong Hoi.

Cam Pha Port Incident

3. Two flights of US aircraft were active in the Cam Pha port area at the time of the alleged incident involving the Soviet ship Turkestan on 2 June. Debriefing of the American pilots who participated in the raid in the Cam Pha area reveals that none of the US aircraft made strafing runs as claimed by the Soviet captain, but were attacking a portion of a highway and an antiaircraft site three miles from the ship with rockets and bombs. Pilots' visual reports and cameras aboard the aircraft confirmed the delivery of the ordnance on the intended targets.

4. The Soviet ship was sighted and acknowledged by the American pilots and the flights were advised of its presence. Although the Soviet ship was overflown, the US aircraft were not lower than 9,000 feet while in the vicinity of the ship.

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antiaircraft fire from the four known sites in the area--including at least 23 37-mm., 57-mm., and 85-mm. weapons--was reported as extremely heavy and it appears that the casualties suffered on the Turkestan were projectiles or fragments from the very intense antiaircraft fire that was taking place at the time.

6. Both undetonated antiaircraft artillery (AAA) projectiles and fragmentation from detonated ones have previously caused damage and casualties as they fell back to ground. Six crewmen aboard the chartered British ship Dartford suffered casualties from falling AAA fragments recently in the Haiphong harbor.

7. One of the Soviet seamen has died as a result of his injuries and another crew member is reported in serious condition. Damage to the ship is apparently minor. Soviet propaganda, including that from Moscow TASS and Pravda, has been heavy and can be expected to make the most of the alleged incident. However, it is apparent that the Soviets wish to treat the incident as an isolated one rather than as a deliberate new US attempt to escalate the war. Hanoi has issued a Foreign Ministry denunciation but the language was not threatening.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A variety of Communist sources this weekend have highlighted Hanoi's willingness to talk with the US in exchange for a bombing cessation as an example of DRV flexibility and reasonableness on the subject of a negotiated settlement. The simultaneous receipt of these reports tends to give Hanoi's offer special emphasis, but there is no indication in these sources of any new movement in Hanoi's attitude or change in DRV conditions for either the initiation of talks or a peaceful settlement. Both the DRV premier and the foreign minister in separate interviews with non-Communist journalists (on 25 and 29 May respectively) said publicly that the DRV stands by its January offer to talk with the US in exchange for an unconditional cessation of the bombings. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the US ambassador in Laos now reports that his Soviet counterpart in Vientiane is pushing the same line.

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The Soviet Ambassador's Comments

6. The Soviet ambassador in Vientiane reportedly told US, Indian, and British diplomats in early June that "the Soviets had genuine assurances from Hanoi that the latter would respond positively if we stopped bombing." He also reportedly said that we had "only to return to the Kosygin initiative" to find Hanoi responsive. If we would "suspend" the bombings, the ambassador said, we would "soon see results."

7. The Soviet ambassador's remarks are similar to those made by the Soviets prior to Kosygin's visit to London, when the Soviets appeared to be giving the impression that a halt in the bombing might bring concessions from Hanoi. There have been no recent indications from other Soviet officials of "assurances" from Hanoi, however. Publicly, Hanoi adamantly refuses to consider any gesture of reciprocal de-escalation, and offers only to talk in exchange for a bombing cessation.

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